

AN EPISTLE ILLUSTRATED BY A PSALM NO. 2538

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 10, 1897
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON
*In connection with the dedication of the Jubilee House,
which commemorated the completion of the beloved Pastor's fiftieth year, June 19, 1884**

[*Many worshippers at the Metropolitan Tabernacle and readers of the printed sermons will remember that, in the year 1884, Mr. Spurgeon delivered a short series of discourses upon the passage of Scripture inscribed upon the Jubilee House at the back of the Tabernacle. The last sermon, but one that he never revised for the press, was the third in the series—#2237, Gratitude for Deliverance From the Grave. In the regular course of publication of the 1884 discourses, we have now come to the other three preached upon this portion of Psalm 118. The present one was *wholly revised by the beloved Pastor*, and the other two, which will follow in due course, were to a considerable extent prepared by him for publication, but they have never before been printed. When completed, they will form a choice memorial of a notable period in Mr. Spurgeon's wonderful life.]

*“Thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall: but the LORD helped me.
The LORD is my strength and song, and is become my salvation.”
Psalm 118:13-14*

IN memory of my fiftieth birthday, our friends have built a house at the back of the Tabernacle, to be used for the purposes of the church, and to be called JUBILEE HOUSE. It will be a lasting Ebenezer bearing this witness, “Hitherto hath the LORD helped us.” I was asked to select a text of Scripture to put upon a stone which all could read, and thereby be made to understand the meaning of the house and its name. The chosen text of Scripture (Psalm 118:13-18) was cut into a stone after a fashion, but the words were not set forth in full—the mason thought it sufficient to inscribe the chapter and the verses.

Now, as people do not generally carry their Bibles with them to refer to, this appeared to me to be a failure. I like a matter made boldly clear, so that he may run that reads it. Therefore, I have had the words themselves engraved upon a large slab of marble, to be read by all of our day and by coming generations also. I believe that such memorials silently work for lasting good and the more of them the better. In this case, at least, if there be not “sermons in stones,” there will be texts of sermons, which is even better.

The passage which is thus made conspicuous is a truthful summary of my personal experience in reference to the faithfulness of God. It may seem to be a long inscription, but I could not afford to give up a line of it. David wrote of himself and I can appropriate every word as descriptive of God's dealings with me. Let me read the whole of it in your hearing—

“THOU HAST THRUST SORE AT ME THAT I MIGHT FALL: BUT THE LORD HELPED ME. THE LORD IS MY STRENGTH AND SONG, AND IS BECOME MY SALVATION. THE VOICE OF REJOICING AND SALVATION IS IN THE TABERNACLES OF THE RIGHTEOUS: THE RIGHT HAND OF THE LORD DOETH VALIANTLY. THE RIGHT HAND OF THE LORD IS EXALTED: THE RIGHT HAND OF THE LORD DOETH VALIANTLY. I SHALL NOT DIE, BUT LIVE, AND DECLARE THE WORKS OF THE LORD. THE LORD HATH CHASTENED ME SORE: BUT HE HATH NOT GIVEN ME OVER UNTO DEATH.”

You may not see why this Scripture is strikingly suitable to the occasion, but I see it most clearly and as it is my own testimony, I will endeavor to make you sympathize with me in it by explaining it. I

would say to you, “O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name forever.” A life so full of the lovingkindness of the Lord should yield more praise to God than any one tongue can possibly utter. “The LORD has done great things for us, whereof we are glad.” Let us therefore praise Him with all our hearts.

Christian experience is the richest product of grace and it ought to be laid at the feet of the Well-beloved from whom it comes, and to whom it belongs. What God has done for one of His people is an indication of what He will do for others of His chosen. The Lord’s providences are promises and His benedictions are predictions. To be silent concerning the lovingkindness of the Lord is a robbery of the worst kind—it is taking from our God the glory due unto His holy name.

Some are afraid to tell what the Lord has done for them, lest men would count them boastful and proud, but this is usually quite a groundless fear. A sense of the goodness of God tends to humble a man and to make him lie low at the feet of his Savior. The more conscious he is of the grace that has been so richly bestowed upon him, the more will he realize his own unworthiness of such abounding mercy. The best of men have continually to endure severe heart-troubles and to mourn over inward failures, so that when they tell how the Lord has delivered them with His right hand and His holy arm, there is little in that confession to minister to self-conceit. The wine that is pressed from the grapes of Christian gratitude will never cause anyone to be intoxicated with pride.

It may also be remarked that many of those who never bear witness to the goodness of the Lord are quite as proud as they could very well become, and therefore the evil of self-exaltation would seem to be a natural weed which grows on any soil. Our business is to extirpate the weed, and not to lay the blame of its existence on what is a harmless and even a beneficial thing. If a dim eye is apt to be dazzled with light, that is no reason why every man should put his candle under a bushel. To kill one evil by encouraging another is a doubtful gain and a sure loss.

Dear brother, if the Lord has dealt well with you, publish it to the honor of His name and to the strengthening of your brethren. God has not blessed you for yourself, or given you bread that you may eat your morsel alone. But He intends that everything He entrusts to you should be employed for the good of all your brethren. It were a pity that a householder should be too modest to feed his family, or a Christian so much afraid of egotism as to refuse to cheer his fellow travelers.

I would stir up all experienced believers to speak well of the name of the Lord. Do not conceal the lovingkindness of the Lord. It is too much our wont to tell out our sorrows—let us not be silent as to our joys. If we fall into a little trouble, we run from one to another, and repeat it till it eats into our souls like a burning acid. We do not let the funeral bells be still, but the marriage peals lie quiet year after year. Do let us be eloquent upon our mercies and silent upon our miseries. Why should we have a shout for our complaints and scarcely a whisper for our thanksgivings? Shall we leave behind us no memorials but gravestones?

Generations gone before us have cheered us into confidence by the records which they have left behind of the Lord’s great goodness—shall we not also bequeath a testimony to our descendants? Do we mean to pass on to them a flying roll written within and without with lamentations? Shall they inherit a dreary desert of unbelief? Far from it. We will write them songs of praises to be sung upon their stringed instruments from century to century. We will engrave upon eternal brass the inscription, “The LORD is good, and his mercy endureth for ever, and his truth throughout all generations.”

Come we now to the first verses of our chosen inscription, “Thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall: but the LORD helped me. The LORD is my strength and song, and is become my salvation.” David remembered his past conflicts—the scars were in his flesh. I will handle the text in the way which the apostle points out to me in the fifth chapter of the epistle to the Romans, at the third, fourth, and fifth verses, “Tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed.”

First, in my text, I see *tribulation and patience*, “Thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall.” In the second place, I see *patience and experience*, “But the LORD helped me.” And in the third place, I see

experience and hope that makes not ashamed. “The LORD is my strength and song, and is become my salvation.”

I. First, then, in the text I see TRIBULATION AND PATIENCE, “Thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall.”

Perhaps, in that word, “thou,” David points to all his enemies as if they had been so united in their hate and so undivided in their attacks, that he looked at them as one single person. If they had not one neck, they were guided by one head and excited by one heart. Yet David had many enemies, so many that in another place he compares them to bees compassing him about.

It may be for the information of some who have lately become Christians, if I tell them that as surely as ever they are the followers of Jesus, they will find themselves the object of enmity. That same Master who has come to make men peaceable, also says in another sense, “Think not I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.”

In bringing in peace, we necessarily contend with the contentious. In establishing righteousness, we inevitably wage war against injustice and oppression. Truth must always strive against error and holiness must battle against sin. Do not expect to be wafted to heaven on the wings of fame—you may have to force your way thither in the teeth of slander.

Our pilgrimage may cause us blistered feet, for it is no holiday trip, but a stern march. It is an up-hill journey to glory and that man had need be a hardy mountaineer who resolves to ascend into the hill of the Lord and to dwell in His holy place. You will be attacked on all sides—ay, even from within. Your own household may furnish you the most desperate of your foes—yea, your own bed may supply the cruellest adversary. From every corner an arrow may be aimed at you. In work and rest, in the world and in the church, you may be called upon to draw your sword.

Strange is it that we may do the maddest actions and awaken no opposition—but the moment we become truly wise, all men are up in arms against us. Is there nothing to ridicule in all the world save the fear of God? Many of God’s people, both in private life and in public stations, find that their piety acts upon the ungodly as a red rag upon a bull—they close their eyes and rush fiercely to the attack. The ribald throng no sooner catch sight of a Christian than they cry, “Here is a target for our witticisms. Let us be sarcastic with him.”

If you do not meet with that kind of persecution, yet you will have to endure affliction and temptation in the world. He who is born for the crown is bound for the cross. A thousand snares are laid in your path and only He who made you a Christian can cover your head and carry you safely through the bombardment which awaits you. “They compassed me about like bees,” says David. That is to say, they were very many and very furious. When bees are excited, they are among the most terrible of assailants, sharp are their stings and they inject a venom which sets the blood on fire.

I read, the other day, of a traveler in Africa who learned this by experience. Negroes were pulling his boat up the river, and as the rope trailed along, it disturbed a bee’s nest, and in a moment the bees were upon him in his cabin. He said that he was stung in the face, the hands, and the eyes. He was all over a mass of fire, and to escape from his assailants he plunged into the river, but they persecuted him still, attacking his head whenever it emerged from the water. After what he suffered from them, he said he would sooner meet two lions at once, or a whole herd of buffaloes, than ever be attacked by bees again. So that the simile which David gives is a very striking one.

A company of mean-spirited, wicked men, who are no bigger than bees, mentally or spiritually, can get together and sting a good man in a thousand places till he is well-nigh maddened by their scorn, their ridicule, their slander, and their misrepresentation. Their very littleness gives them the power to wound with impunity. Such has been the experience of some of us, especially in days now happily past.

For one, I can say, I grew inured to falsehood and spite. The stings, at last, caused me no more pain than if I had been made of iron, but at first they were galling enough. Do not be surprised, dear friends, if you have the same experience. Look for it and when it comes, count it no strange thing, for in this way the saints of God have been treated in all time. Thank God the wounds are not fatal, nor of long

continuance! Time brings ease and use creates hardihood. No real harm has come to any of us who have run the gauntlet of abuse—not even a bruise remains.

But I do not think that this is quite all that the psalmist meant. He intended to point out *some grand adversary* who had led the attack, “Thou hast thrust sore at me.” Perhaps it was Saul. Perhaps Ahithophel. Perhaps his own son Absalom. In our case, we remember no adversary but Satan, “*thou*.”

I think I see him now before me. That dread fallen spirit, the arch-enemy of our souls. “O Satan, you have thrust sorely at me!” Many a child of God must utter this exclamation. It is no fault of Satan’s if we are not quite destroyed. It is not for want of malice, or subtlety, or fury, or perseverance on the devil’s part, if we still hold the field. He has met us many times, using all kinds of weapons, shooting from the right hand and from the left. He has tempted us to pride and despair, to care and to carelessness, to presumption and to idleness, to self-confidence and to mistrust of God. We are not ignorant of his devices, nor inexperienced in his cruelties. He has fixed himself in our memory so that we recognize him and cry, “*Thou hast thrust sorely at me*.”

I know that I am addressing many saints of God who can use David’s language with emphasis, “Thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall,” for I dwell among a tried and tempted people. The battle between the soul of the believer and the devil is a stern one. No doubt there are multitudes of inferior spirits who tempt men and tempt them successfully, too, but they are much more easily put aside by godly men than their great leader can be.

Apollyon is master of legions and possesses the highest degree of power and craftiness. He who has once stood foot to foot with him will know that Christian was indeed hard put to it in the Valley of Humiliation, when the dragon stopped the pilgrim’s way and made him fight for his life. Bunyan says, “In this combat no man can imagine, unless he has seen and heard, as I did, what yelling and hideous roaring Apollyon made all the time of the fight—he spoke like a dragon, and on the other side, what sighs and groans burst from Christian’s heart. I never saw him all the while give so much as one pleasant look, till he perceived he had wounded Apollyon with his two-edged sword. Then, indeed, he did smile and looked upward—but it was the most dreadful sight I ever saw.”

No Christian will find much to smile at while he is contending for his faith, his hope, his life, with this most cruel of foes. Messengers of Satan buffet us terribly, but Satan himself wounds desperately. Wherefore we are wisely taught to pray, “Deliver us from the evil one.” Single combat with the arch-enemy will strain every muscle of the soul and pain every nerve of the spirit. It will force the cold sweat from the brow and make the heart leap with palpitations of fear, and thus in some degree bring us to our Gethsemane and make us feel that the pains of hell have gotten hold of us.

This prince of darkness has a sharp sword, great cunning of fence, tremendous power of aim, and boundless malice of heart, and thus he is no mean adversary, but one whom it is a terrible trial to meet. In his dread personality is contained a mass of danger for us poor mortals and as we think of our experience of him in the past, we cry with emphasis, “*Thou hast thrust sore at me*.”

Carefully notice that while David thus speaks of one enemy, he indicates *the subtlety of his attack* by the language which he uses, “Thou hast thrust sore at me.” That is not a cutting with the edge of the sword, but a piercing with the rapier, a stabbing with a dagger. A practiced soldier may guard himself against the full swing of the sword, but the rapier leaps in all of a sudden and reaches the heart. Armor protected the ancient warrior from the sword, but the thrust found out the joint of the harness and penetrated the body. Thus Satan deals with us.

We stand upon our guard against him and we fancy we have shielded ourselves at all points from head to foot. And we watch him, for we are not ignorant of his devices, and when he smites, we turn his blow aside. Again falls his stroke and we ward it off, but just when we half think that we may rest a minute, the rapier is thrust in and the blood flows.

Ah, me, I have heard of a ruler who, in olden times, wore armor all day and all night long for a full year, for he was aware that an assassin dogged his footsteps. But it grew burdensome to wear this heavy suit continually, so he took it off and within five minutes he was stabbed and dead. Mind that you never

remove your armor, for the foe who seeks your destruction watches you so carefully that he will perceive your momentary carelessness.

Even with your armor on, you may not be secure, for he knows where the joints are, where one piece of the harness fits into another and how to give his thrust where it will tell. O God, if Your servants are kept throughout life secure from such a foe as this, how they will glorify Your blessed name! In each case where, “that evil one touches him not,” the Lord will have a grateful minstrel to sound forth His praise eternally, even as I do this day.

Remember, also, dear friends, that the *design of these assaults is most malicious*. The object of the enemy is to make us sin, “Thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall.” That is, either that I might fall from my upright walk in true doctrine, or that I might decline from my first love, or worst of all, that I might stumble into open sin and dishonor my profession. Satan would not be content for us to stagger—he desires that we fall. He has fallen and he would hurl us down if he could.

This he specially desires for those who take the lead in the church of God. If they were seen to fall, the devil would publish the wretched news through all the streets of Hades. The triumphant shout, “A champion of God has fallen,” would be heard both on earth and in hell, and it would cause great rejoicing. If, in this warfare, “The standard-bearer falls, as fall full well he may,” for never heard I yet of a fray more deadly, then the wish of Apollyon will be gratified, and his wretched soul will feel as much of satisfaction as its misery can know. Oh, what a mercy to be kept standing where the ground is so slippery, where so many have fallen, where we ourselves are so apt to slide, and where such cunning foes are ready to push us down!

What gratitude we owe to Him who has given His angels charge concerning us, to keep us in all our ways! How earnestly should we adore Him who has kept us from falling and who will still do so till He presents us faultless before His Father’s face! In the course of fifty years, many have been the times when my feet had almost gone—and I cannot forget them.

I remember traveling in the Alps over a road that they called Hell Place, because the rocks were so terribly smooth that neither men nor mules could get sure foothold. I was glad when that bit of the road was passed, even as I am this day happy to have come so far on my journey. “When I said, my foot slippeth; thy mercy, O LORD, held me up.” I would at this moment bless the Lord, who keeps the feet of His saints.

II. I turn from the first to the second head, that I may speak of patience and experience, “Thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall, but the LORD helped me.”

It would be well to set those words to music and let the whole congregation of the faithful sing aloud with glad hearts, “But the Lord helped me.” The bass would sound well from a venerable brother who would roll it forth ponderously, “The Lord helped *me*.” And many an aged sister would take another part and sing in a higher key, “The Lord helped *me*.” Fathers and mothers, who have had a large family of children about them and have by a hard struggle brought them up, will each one sing, “Hitherto hath the LORD helped *me*,” while the lone sufferer will sing, “I was brought low, and he helped *me*.”

The younger believers, though they have not gone so far on the journey, have nevertheless had their share of trial and of grace—they also can each one say, “The LORD helped *me*.” Let it go round the assembly, till every child of God has added his note and the enemy, in his deep abodes, can hear us shout exultingly, “Thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall: but JEHOVAH helped me.”

Helped me to what? Well, helped me, first, *to believe*, for David evidently had trusted in the Lord and found it better than trusting in man. Satan makes a special attack upon our faith. If he could destroy it, he would have captured the citadel of our spiritual life, but this he cannot do. Faith is a dear child of the Holy Spirit and He that creates faith will not desert it, but keep it as the apple of His eye. He gives more grace and increases our faith. He enables us to trust our God and to hold fast by His way. It is He who has helped our faith to “laugh at impossibilities and say, ‘It shall be done.’”

In the dark hour, the Lord has given us to see by faith and in the storm He has made us to ride the billows by faith. That is the great matter, for so long as faith survives, hope is not sick unto death. I do

not doubt that some of you wonder to-night that your faith has survived the putrid skepticism of the age, the stagnant atmosphere of indifference, the malarious air of heresy which surrounds all things. If it were possible, the enemies of Christ would deceive the very elect, but the godly live by faith.

Next, the Lord has not only helped us to believe, but He has helped us *to pray*. When David was brought low, then he prayed, and from this holy practice we have never desisted, though tempted many a time to do so. Long waiting for an answer has been an inducement to many of you to cease from pleading. But like the poor importunate widow, you have pressed your suit and now you are able to bear witness that it is no vain thing to wait upon the Lord.

Who was it that kept you pleading? Was it not the Lord who helped you to continue instant in prayer? You would soon have heard the devil say, "Behold, he has ceased to pray," if the Lord had not daily led you to the mercy seat and enabled you there to plead the sprinkled blood. The fire of devotion would have been quenched by the black fiend who threw water upon it if it had not been secretly kept alive by One who was hidden behind the wall, and secretly poured oil upon the flames. Men do not cry to their heavenly Father, in their closets, unless the divine Spirit draws them into this hallowed communion. Jacob wrestled with the angel because the angel wrestled with him.

When the Holy Ghost creates in us the inwrought prayer, it is sure to be an effectual prayer—but the ineffectual prayers of our own unaided spirit are such failures that we are soon induced to give them up. Help in prayer is the best of help. God never fails that man in public whom He has strengthened in private. So long as our infirmities are helped by the Spirit in prayer, we may rest assured that they will also be helped in all other respects. When blind Samson began to pray for strength, it was a sign that, notwithstanding all that the enemy had done against him, he was yet to win a great victory and declare again that the Lord had helped him.

Surely, this text also means that as the enemy tries to make us fall, so God has helped us *to stand*. O child of God, if you have maintained your integrity, if with all your losses you have never been unrighteous, but have been honest before God, if, under slander, you have not lost your temper, nor rendered railing for railing, if, when much tempted of the devil, you have still said, "Get you behind me, Satan," and have striven against him, then you are ready with all your heart to bless the Lord who has helped you. The way of the upright is beset with snares and he who has run therein for many years without stumbling is indeed favored of the Lord.

When I think of some professors of my acquaintance, who have grievously defiled their garments, I hope that they will be saved, but I know that it must be "so as by fire." This reflection makes me pray God that others of us, and especially that I myself, may be graciously preserved so that we do not transgress. How can we stand, so feeble, so encompassed with infirmity, and tempted in so many points, unless our God shall help us? Hitherto He has helped us and therefore we look forward to the future with a joyous confidence.

*"He who hath led will lead
All through the wilderness;
He who hath fed will feed;
He who hath blessed will bless.
He who hath heard thy cry,
Will never close His ear;
He who hath marked thy faintest sigh,
Will not forget thy tear.
He loveth always, faileth never;
We rest on Him today, forever!"*

Beside that, God has helped us *to fight*. "Thou hast thrust sore at me," says David, "but the LORD helped me." Helped him to do what? Why, to thrust back again quite as sorely against his spiritual foes! He says of the bees, in the verse to which we have referred, "In the name of the LORD will I destroy them."

Some of us can thank God that we have kept our fighting-arm in trim till this very day. A bow of steel is broken by our arms even now. We have not changed our testimony for Christ, nor cast away our confidence, which has great recompense of reward. We have been sorely put to it by the Rationalists of the age, but still we have held up the Gospel and nothing but the Gospel. And still we cry, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

Dear brethren, take care that when the battle rages you do not stand altogether on the defensive. Carry the war into the enemy's country. Let us not only hold our own, but seek to win souls for Christ. Let us put Satan on the defensive—it is much better for us to attack him than to be attacked by him. Let us give him cause to look to his own domains, that he may not have so much force to spare for his onslaughts upon us.

When poor Christian was down under Apollyon's foot, his life was nearly pressed out of him, but he saw that as God would have it, the sword which had fallen out of his hand was just within his reach. So he stretched out his hand and grasped that, "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," and therewith he gave his adversary such a terrible stab that he spread his dragon-wings and flew away. Oh, to give the fiend such a stab as that!

Let us tell out the promises. Let us proclaim the Gospel. Let us publish everywhere the free grace of God—and in this way we shall turn the battle to the gate and cause those who pursued us to be themselves pursued. Hallelujah for the cross of Christ! We bear it forward into the ranks of the foe, confident of victory. Our courage fails not, neither does our hope wax faint—the Lord who has helped us is the God of victories. "The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge."

III. I will conclude this meditation with the third head, which is, EXPERIENCE AND A HOPE THAT MAKES NOT ASHAMED.

What says the voice of experience? "The LORD is my strength and song, and is become my salvation." When you are home, I wish you would read the song of Moses, which the children of Israel sang at the Red Sea, and you will find that these words are borrowed from that grand old song.

One of our proverbs says, "Old songs and old wine are the best." Certainly they lose nothing by keeping and we may truly say of this blessed verse that it is all the sweeter because there is a ring of Miriam's timbrels about it—and we note the sound of dancing feet as we read the words. Hear you not the glorious shout, "Sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously. The LORD is my strength and my song, and is become my salvation"? Come then, brethren, let us sing this song upon our stringed instruments all the days of our lives.

First, *our God has become our strength*. We are weak enough, but what a power is His! He is our strength to suffer, giving us patience. He is our strength to work, working in us, with us, by us. Our strength to fight, for it is He that girds us for the battle. The Lord is our strength—what an unfailing fountain of force!

Did you say, just now, "I will speak no more in the name of the LORD"? Did you complain of being dull and weak? Have you forgotten where your strength lies? Did you allude to your own native strength? Indeed, that is utter weakness. Complain of it as much as you please, for in you there is neither power nor wisdom. But would it not be wise to remember that your real strength is the Lord? "*The LORD is my strength*." In such a case, weakness is lost, and I can say, with Paul, "when I am weak, then am I strong."

Did I hear you say, my dear sister, that you would have to give up that Bible class because you do not feel equal to it? What do you mean by being equal to it? Why, that you do not seem to have the personal strength! That is no news. It is well that you remember it and are emptied of your former self-reliance. Still, believe that in you there is no spiritual power and turn at once to the strong for strength.

When a man is called to any holy work, the sooner he is persuaded that he is not of himself equal to it, the better, but, at the same time, it will be well for him to receive that further persuasion, "The LORD is my strength." If the Holy Ghost takes possession of a man, or a woman, what can they not say? What

can they not do? The Lord can take up the poorest worm among us and make him thresh the mountains till they become like chaff.

Let us, therefore, sing this charming sonnet with all our hearts, “The LORD is my strength.” I will rely in no degree upon oratorical power, or human learning, or natural gifts, or acquired aptitude, or on anything that I have, but I will rest in the Lord alone. Brother, when God is your strength, you are girt with omnipotence. Go to your work, whatever it may be, and believe in the Lord as to your ability to perform it.

A Negro slave used to explain what practical faith meant in this manner, “Why, Massa, if de Lord say, ‘Sambo, jump tro’ that wall,’ all Sambo got to do is to jump. It’s God’s part to get him tro’ the wall.” Just so. He who gives the command will justify it by enabling us to obey it if we give our whole hearts to the doing of it. If God bids you do what is quite beyond your strength, it is yours to proceed in the way of obedience, and God will enable you to accomplish His bidding.

He never did send His soldiers on a warfare at their own charges and He never will. He will supply His armies with rations, and weapons, and ammunition—be you sure of that. He does not reap where He has not sown, nor gather where He has not strawed. He is the Lord all-sufficient when we are most insufficient. With Him for our strength, we cannot faint, or fail, but on the contrary, we shall renew our force and rise continually to something higher and better than before.

Notice the next word, our *God has also become our song*. “The LORD is my strength *and song*.” I find that the commentators refer this to the period after the battle, so that it may mean, “The LORD is my strength while I am waging the war, and my song when I have won the victory.” This is an excellent sense, but another seems to me more clearly in the words, “The LORD is my strength and song.” Both are in the present tense—we sing while we fight.

When Cromwell’s men marched to battle, singing a grand old Psalm with one accord, the battle was half won before they struck a blow. Their hearts were fortified and their arms were strengthened by their song. Do you desire a far nobler example? Your great Lord and mine, when He went to His last tremendous conflict, where the powers of darkness marshaled all their strength against Him, and He strove until He sweat as it were great drops of blood—how did He go? Here is the answer, “After supper, they sang a hymn.”

After they had sung a hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives, that is, to Gethsemane—He went to His agony singing. That brave heart was about to be deserted by His friends and even forsaken of His God, but into that deadly contest, wherein He must be cast into the disgrace and dishonor of scourging and shameful spitting—even to that, our Champion went with a song upon His lips, because the Lord was His song.

So, my friends, while we are working, let us sing. You will do your work much better if your hands keep time to a cheery strain. While we are fighting let us sing and plant our blows while we chant our hallelujahs.

*“Ever this our war cry,
Victory, victory.”*

Let us claim the victory, anticipate it, and shout it, while yet we are contending. On our beds let us sing God’s high praises and magnify Him in the midst of the fires. Set your whole lives to music. Make your entire career a psalm. Let not your life be a dirge, as it is with some, who, from morning till night, are mournfully wailing *Misereres*. Let us not moan out, to the tune, “Job”—

*“Lord, what a wretched land is this,
That yields us no supply!”*

But let us lift up our voices to some such jubilant hymn as this—

“The men of grace have found

*Glory begun below.
Celestial fruits on earthly ground
From faith and hope may grow.*

*“Then let our songs abound,
And every tear be dry.
We’re marching through Immanuel’s ground
To fairer worlds on high.”*

But what shall we sing about? Well, “The LORD is my song.” Sing the Father and His love eternal, how He chose His people and made them His own before the earth was. Sing the Son of God, whose delights were with the sons of men before He came here to dwell. Tell how He took our flesh to take away our guilt. Tell how He died, and rose again, and led captivity captive, and ascended up on high. Tell how He will surely come again to be King of Kings and Lord of Lords, when the earth shall ring with welcome hosannas at His glorious appearing.

Make that your song, but do not forget to sing the Holy Spirit’s love. Magnify the Holy Ghost, the Illuminator, Comforter, Guide, abiding Advocate, and Paraclete. You will never need to cease from this song, for, “this God is our God for ever and ever. He will be our guide even unto death.” Glory be unto the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost!

Whenever I grow very dull through pain, or heavy through want of sleep, I say to myself, “I will note down what I owe to God of praise, which I cannot just now pay to Him, that I may do so when I get a little better,” and then my conscience chides me, saying, “Praise Him now! Bless God for aching bones! Bless God for a weary head! Bless God for troubles and trials, for he who can so praise the Lord is singing a truer and more acceptable song than youth, and health, and happiness can present.” A seraph never praised God with an aching head. Cherubs never blessed the Lord upon a sick bed—so you will excel even the angels if you magnify the Lord in sickness. Why should you not, since you also can say, “The LORD is my strength and song”?

The close of the text says, “and *is become my salvation.*” Brothers and sisters, after all our experience, we know that there is salvation in none but the Lord. If we have not any experience, because we only began to believe in Jesus Christ five minutes ago, yet we know that He is become our salvation. The moment we trust the Savior, we are saved.

But I want you to consider this little sentence and so to believe it intelligently. What do I mean when I say that you are saved? If you believe in Jesus, you are saved from the guilt of sin. Yes, bless God for pardon. But do you not know that you are also saved from the power of sin? The dominion of sin is over. It lives like a snake with its head broken. It wriggles and writhes, but its head is crashed. The power of sin in every believer is overcome—there is no sin from which we cannot escape. There is no evil habit that we cannot cast off if we are really saved. The Lord has become our salvation from all sin.

“Alas!” cries one, “I have to endure very fierce temptation.” Temptation in itself cannot harm you if you do not yield to it, and you need not, for the Lord has become your salvation. Temptation is, “the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.” “Oh, but I am so poor, and I am so sick, and I am so tried in a thousand ways!” Never mind, you are saved from all the evil which is in these trials. Affliction cannot hurt you—nothing of that kind can do you any injury, for the Lord has become your salvation.

“Oh, but think of the dark, black night which may come over us in the future!” Never fear—He who has become your salvation will be your light. You are as safe in the dark as in the light, if the Lord has become your Helper. “But I have to die.” Bless God for that! It were not worth while living if we could not die. It is the very joy of this earthly life to think that it will come to an end. What would a sailor say who was on a voyage that would never bring him to a port? What would a traveler say if he was toiling along a road which would never bring him home? Blessed be God, we shall come to the pearly gates, by-and-by! Let us not be alarmed about that, for the Lord has become our salvation.

We are saved from death—we cannot really die. We shall fall asleep, to wake up in the likeness of our Lord. Blessed sleep! Who does not long for it? “He is become my salvation,” not for a time, but forever—my sure salvation, my eternal salvation. Wherefore, take courage and let us go forward in our walk and warfare, for this is our note of victory, as it was the hymn of Moses and the children of Israel at the Red Sea, “The LORD is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation; He is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father’s God, and I will exalt him.” Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Amen.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.